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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CONAKRY 000165

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TREASURY FOR OFFICE OF AFRICAN NATIONS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/11/2017
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SUBJECT: SITREP NO. 32: GUINEA UNREST, FEB. 11, 1430 GMT

REF: CONAKRY 164 AND PREVIOUS

Classified By: Ambassador Jackson McDonald. Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

SITUATION ON THE GROUND

¶1. (SBU) The situation in Guinea remains tense today, Feb. 11, with sporadic episodes of violent unrest in parts of Conakry and upcountry. The level of unrest is substantially lower today than yesterday. However, everyone expects an upsurge in violence tomorrow, Feb. 12, when the general strike officially resumes.

¶2. (C) We have received an unconfirmed/unconfirmed report from a source at the Presidency that Prime Minister Eugene Camara has submitted to President Lansana Conte a draft decree declaring a state of emergency.

¶3. (SBU) Throughout today, Feb. 11, protesters have blocked Route du Prince, the main axis down the middle of the peninsula upon which the city of Conakry is situated. Barricades consisting of burning tires, rocks, garbage, and other debris impede all traffic from Hamdallaye to Bambeto to Cosa. Barricades are also blocking Taouyah Road and other streets, including access roads to the airport. Security forces have responded to these incidents, temporarily dispersing crowds that quickly reformed.

¶4. (U) The airport remains open, but few flights are operating. Air France has canceled its Paris-Conakry-Paris flight today.

¶5. (C) According to French Ambassador Jean-Michel Berrit (strictly protect), Air France canceled the flight because it had received threats from people opposed to the planned departure of presidential family members on the flight.

¶6. (C) Many embassy contacts have expressed concern about increased lawlessness and vigilantism. In N'Zerekore, capital of the remote Forest Region, one organizer of a DHRF program states there is currently no evidence of the rule of law in town, as the gendarmes, police and local authorities are not present. Union leader Rabiattou Diallo told PolOff she shares those concerns. She stated the labor unions have made no concrete call to action tomorrow because their leaders are all confined to their homes, unable to meet due to the security situation. "We have no idea what will happen, it is uncontrollable," she said, "We offered proposals to the government to help calm the people and they didn't listen to

us."

¶7. (SBU) The sense of lawlessness is shared by an unfortunate Amcit, currently seeking refuge in Kankan. The Amcit, a former Peace Corps volunteer who speaks the local languages, was bicycling through the region, hoping to reach a safe village before the strike resumed -- disregarding the current Travel Warning. She found shelter with the World Food Program coordinator, and nearly had to flee when crowds looted the WFP warehouse, office, and threatened the residence where they were hiding. At last contact with the consular section, she was frightened but unharmed, and security forces have intervened.

¶8. (SBU) Embassy Americans and local employees have reported other acts of violence involving security forces, including an unconfirmed case in Conakry of a security officer set upon by crowds after opening fire. It is unclear how many people have been killed in the last 24 hours.

SECURITY

¶9. (C) French Ambassador Jean-Michel Berritt told the Ambassador today that his embassy's crisis-management team continues to monitor events closely. He said that he would wait to see how events unfold tomorrow before deciding on "appropriate measures." He gave the impression that, if the situation deteriorates substantially tomorrow, he would commence some form of drawdown or evacuation. (Note: The French Ambassador is always careful avoid the word "evacuation," even with us, because news of a French "evacuation" would spread quickly and contribute to anxious

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speculation about future events.)

¶10. (SBU) The U.S. Mission remains under Authorized Departure for eligible family members. We understand that the U.N. agencies in Guinea are considering moving to a similar status.

¶11. (U) Post remains at full standfast. All USG personnel and private American citizens have been advised to remain at home, except for the handful of personnel at the embassy. Amcits have received the same message through the latest warden message, issued February 10. The consular section has received several inquiries from wardens and other citizens regarding next steps if the situation worsens.

¶12. (C) We are monitoring events very closely. Post management is in frequent contact with core EAC members, some of whom are at standfast at home. We are reviewing our security posture on an ongoing basis.

¶13. (C) Based on the facts on the ground, and with the concurrence of the core EAC, the Ambassador is requesting (septel) the deployment of an ESAT. In our judgment, the situation will almost certainly deteriorate further and there is no near-term resolution in sight, short of President Conte's resignation or ouster. Deployment of an ESAT at the juncture appears prudent and justified.

¶14. (C) We are also considering -- depending upon how events unfold tomorrow -- a change in status from Authorized Departure for EFMs to Ordered Departure for EFMs and perhaps some staff. We are not/not requesting a change in status as of now.

MCDONALD